opened branches and by when the banks will achieve the target of opening branches in the rural areas of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) to (c) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that it has not issued any directions to commercial banks to keep pending the licences in respect of centres in urban and metropolitan areas till the requirements in rural and semi-urban areas are met. However, the banks are advised to open branches at rural and semi-urban centres on priority. RBI upto 31.1.1989 has allotted 5966 eligible rural and semi-urban centres for opening branches under the current Branch Licensing Policy for 1985-90 and banks had opened branches at 2627 such centres. RBI has advised the banks to open branches at the remaining rural and semi-urban centres expeditiously preferably by 31.3.1989 with a view to implementing the Service Area Approach to rural lending.

Curbing of Black Money

294. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any efforts during the past few months to combat the menace of black money in the country;

(b) if so, what are the details of the steps taken in this regard; and

(c) what further steps Government contemplate to combat this menace?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) to (c) Combating tax evasion is a continuous process and the Government takes necessary legislative and administrative measures from time to time to curb generation, growth and use of black money. Some of the measures which are taken by the Income-tax Department are systematic survey operations, search and seizure operations in appropriate cases, verification of information by the Central Information Branches in a planned manner and in-depth investigation in a manageable number of selected cases.

In addition to the above steps, it is proposed to further augment the strength of officers at senior level in the Investigation Wing of the Income-tax Department for intensifying the efforts to combat tax-evasion.

Montreal Protocol on Environment

295. SHRI DHULESHWAR MEENA: SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Montreal Protocol limiting the production and emission of substances which deplete the Ozone layer has been signed by India;

(b) if not, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the views of the other Departments such as Defence, Petrochemicals and the DGTD have been obtained on the above Montreal Protocol;

(d) if so, what are their reactions; and

(e) how many other countries have so far signed the above Protocol and whether India has attended the Conference as an Observer and if so, what is Government's reaction thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI): (a) No, Sir.